

Bike/Walk Midland: Sidewalk Bicycling

Some people think that bicycles are only allowed on sidewalks, and other people think that bicycles are NOT allowed on sidewalks. Neither of these views is correct: bicycles can use the sidewalk and they can ride in the street. However, riding a bike on the sidewalk is very different than riding in the street. When on the sidewalk, a bicycle "becomes" a pedestrian, and must behave like one for everyone's safety.

Somewhere around the age of 10, children are capable of learning the skills to be safe street bicyclists, so it is normal for younger children to be restricted to sidewalk use. While sidewalks are less safe than streets for adult cyclists, some may still choose to ride on the sidewalk due to traffic density, limited street riding skills, or personal concerns. Safe bicycle use on the sidewalk means a more enjoyable experience for all.

Bicycles on the sidewalk must yield to pedestrians, slowing or moving to the side to pass in either direction. In general, bicycles on the sidewalk should ride at moderate speeds (less than street speeds) to insure their own and pedestrian safety. When crossing streets, sidewalk cyclists must also behave like pedestrians, stopping before crossing when traffic is present. Curb cuts are not there to make it possible to fly across an intersection on a bike. Drivers entering and leaving driveways are not used to looking for bicycles traveling at speed on the sidewalk, so riders need to be especially aware of potential conflicts. In busy sidewalk areas, such as in front of businesses, cyclists must ride slowly with high awareness, and perhaps would be better off to dismount and walk their bikes.

Bikes can safely use sidewalks, but knowing the rules and following them is required.

For more information: www.midland-mi.org/government/departments/planning/Planning/planninghome.htm